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SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1921

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A DECADE OF AMERICAN MATHEMATICS

THE year just closing carries with it into the past another calendar decade, and the fact suggests that I take up with an audience representing the mathematical section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the two other mathematical societies meeting with it, a sketch of the progress of our science in this country during the decade. In doing this, I am led to reflect, when I think of the struggle that has marked the period, that though it is difficult to see how a thoughtful and disinterested person can enthuse over international rivalries in territory, dominion, trade advantages or other details of national prestige which are pregnant with dangers of destruction far beyond any possible advantages gained, a desire for national preeminence in scientific attainment is most wholesome and valuable.

I wish I might, therefore, compare the work of America during the decade with that of other countries. But even if this were fair, in view of the handicap the war has imposed on other countries, it would inevitably entail a sitting in judgment on questions of value over a field so broad, with so large a body of workers, that I have hesitated to assume the competency or to appropriate the time requisite to a proper performance of the task.

Instead, I am restricting myself to a review of some aspects of the work of this country alone, seeking to find the directions it has taken, to find some of the respects in which it has been weak, and in which strong, and to draw a few conclusions as to strengthening it in the future.

As to an analysis of the contributions made, you will agree that since over 1,200 articles

¹ Address delivered as retiring vice-president of Section A of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, at Chicago, Dec. 29, 1920.